シャーマンキング

03

story & art by
SATOSHI MIZUKAMI

CIRCLE 14
PAST SHOCK

SOME-
ONE...

SOME-
ONE...

...SAY

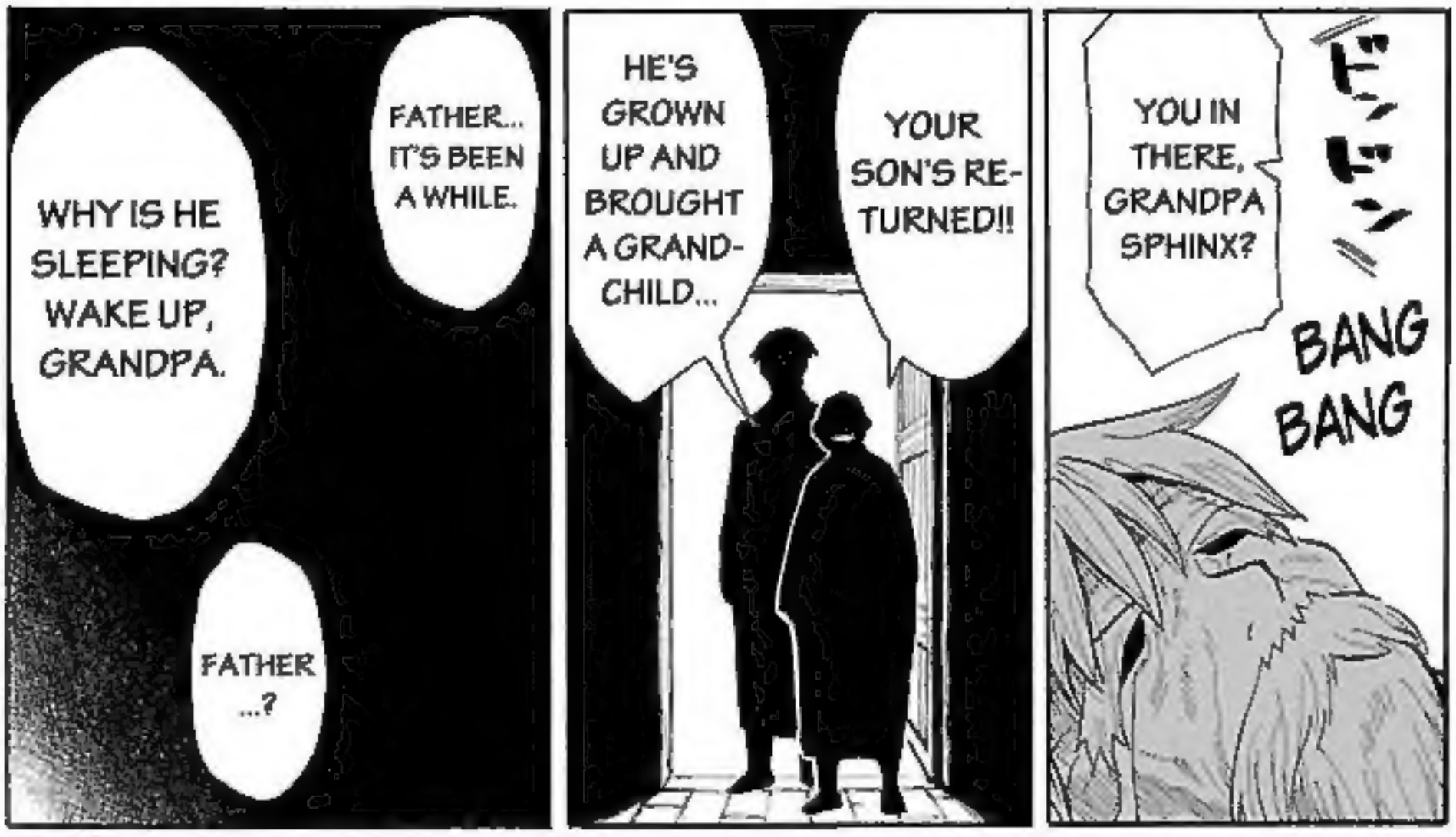
MY
NAME...

...WELCOME
BACK...

OKAY.
MASTER
FUUTA.

GOOD
MORNING.

WHAT ...?


FATHER... IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
WHY IS HE SLEEPING? WAKE UP, GRANDPA.
FATHER ...?
HE'S GROWN UP AND BROUGHT A GRAND-CHILD...
YOUR SON'S RE-TURNED!!
YOU IN THERE, GRANDPA SPHINX?
BANG BANG

I'M FLORS, DAMMIT!

HUH?

WHO'RE YOU CALLIN' SPHINX?

I'M FUUTA.

THAT'S RIGHT.

I'M, UH... WHAT WAS IT?

WAIT... NO.

...MAS-TER?

HRMPH.

MORNIN'.

MORNING, FUU...

HEY.

...WHO ARE YOU?

I'M FLO... I'M FUUTA.

...FUU-TA?

STARE...

WHAT?

WHA...

WEIRD, AM I?

YUP.

YUP.

YOU'RE ACTING WEIRD.

FUUTA?

WHAT'S WRONG, FUUTA?

DID YOUR FEVER MELT YOUR BRAIN?

SUPER WEIRD...

...

NOTHING... IT'S NOTHING.

...

YOU MORON.

I WISH YOU'D TOLD ME ABOUT THAT SOONER...

HE'S MIXED UP WITH HIS PAST SELF.

HE JUMPED INTO THE NEXT PAST LIFE WITHOUT MUCH OF A BREAK BETWEEN THE PREVIOUS ONE.

RUNE, GOOD MORNING.

KOKO-CHAN, MY MASTER TURNED INTO AN OLD MAN.

LEAVE HIM AND HE'LL GET OVER IT.

ROAR

I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU.

WHY WOULD I WARN YOU?

WHY DON'T WE HAVE A SEAT AROUND HERE AND TALK ABOUT IT?

I'M TIRED.

ANYWAY... WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LIVES OF FLORS AND LOCA AFTER THAT?

HE'S ACTUALLY PRETTY CUTE LIKE THIS.

THIS IS KIND OF FUNNY.

IT'S DISCON-CERTING.

I FEEL SO WEAK, THOUGH.

WHEW.

HEY.

HE'S ALREADY SITTING.

SURE, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE NOW GOT THE STAMINA OF AN OLD MAN, IS IT?

IT'S GREAT THAT YOU WEREN'T UNHAPPY.

SO THAT'S HOW FLORS' LIFE WENT AFTER HE RETURNED HOME.

HUH...

REALLY?

OH.

FLORS...

ARE YOUR PARENTS FIGHTING AGAIN?

THE OLD MAN WAS MORE OF A FATHER TO ME THAN MY REAL PARENTS.

BECAUSE LOCA DELAYED MY WORK AND PREVENTED ME FROM SEEING MY MASTER ON HIS DEATHBED...

I WASN'T EXACTLY HAPPY EITHER.

...I RESENTED HER.

I DON'T HAVE ANYONE TO INHERIT THE WORKSHOP.

HA HA HA.

WHY DON'T YOU BE MY KID?

IT'S COOL, LIKE THE SYMBOL OF A HERO.

THOSE TWO...

I WONDER WHY YOUR CHEEK BOTHERS THEM SO MUCH?

MR. SPHINX.

THEN HE'S MR. SPHINX.

YEAH, AND HE TOOK OVER THE WORK-SHOP...

A SPHINX?

I HEARD HE MADE A SPHINX ACROSS THE OCEAN.

MR. SPHINX.

MR. SPHINX.

MR. SPHINX.

SHE WAS UNHAPPY AS WELL.

DON'T WORRY.

WHAT ABOUT LOCA...?

...

THE KING HEARD ABOUT IT AND ACCUSED THE ENTIRE FAMILY OF TREASON AND KILLED EVERY ONE OF US.

...MY FATHER ARBOL WAS BRAGGING ABOUT YOUR SPHINX WHILE DRINKING WITH OTHER NOBLES.

A WHILE AFTER YOU LEFT ..

HE SAID EDUCATING THE PEOPLE WOULD BRING TROUBLE.

..ARBOL WAS TRYING TO TEACH THE LABORERS. THE KING WAS A NARROW-MINDED MAN AND DIDN'T LIKE IT.

WHAT .?

..WHA...

SAYING, "IF YOU POSSESS THE PROTECTOR GOD OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, DOES THAT MEAN YOU WANT TO BE KING?"

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPHINX BECAME A GOOD EXCUSE TO REMOVE ARBOL.

...WERE ALL BEHEADED

THE FAMILY MEMBERS AND EVEN THE LABORERS UNDER ARBOL'S INFLUENCE .

IT WAS THE EASIEST DEATH I'D HAD SO FAR.

IT WAS ONE SWING OF THE AXE.

EVERYONE.

EVERY-ONE WHO HELPED US..

AND HALA-RA. AR-BOL... AND LOCA...

CAREFREE GRANDPA SPHINX.

BECAUSE OF THAT THING. ?

BE...

WE WEREN'T CONCERNED WITH HOW THE SPHINX TURNED OUT.

I WISH YOU HAD DIRECTED THOSE FEELINGS TOWARDS THE VILLAGERS I TRIED TO SAVE.

AH!

I WON'T SLEEP WELL IF YOU GET SICK EVERY TIME WE TALK.

EAST!! WE'RE LEAVING.

COME TO SCHOOL TOMOR-ROW.

AND GET OVER YOUR PAST SHOCK ALREADY.

BYE.

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY

FUUTA-KUN .. WHY DID YOU SEE A PAST LIFE ON YOUR OWN?

...

KOKO-CHAN, EAST-SAN, SEE YOU LATER.

FARE-WELL.

YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE.

I SEE...

..DON'T DO IT ANYMORE. NOTHING GOOD COMES FROM KNOWING

I ENDED UP SEEING A DIFFERENT ONE...

...I WAS TRYING TO SEE FORTUNA'S LIFE.

NO.. NEVER MIND.

NO.

WHO'S THAT ...?

DO YOU KNOW HIM?

. SPACI-FICA..

I'M COMING.

WHAT'S WRONG?

文房具
YOUR HOUSE ISN'T THAT WAY
HUH? MAS-TER?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING SENILE.
I WAS SO SURPRISED.
SO, WHAT IS THIS?
YOU WERE JUST SHOPPING.

...BE QUIET FOR A WHILE?

RU-NE...

TONIGHT COULD YOU.

I'LL RIP

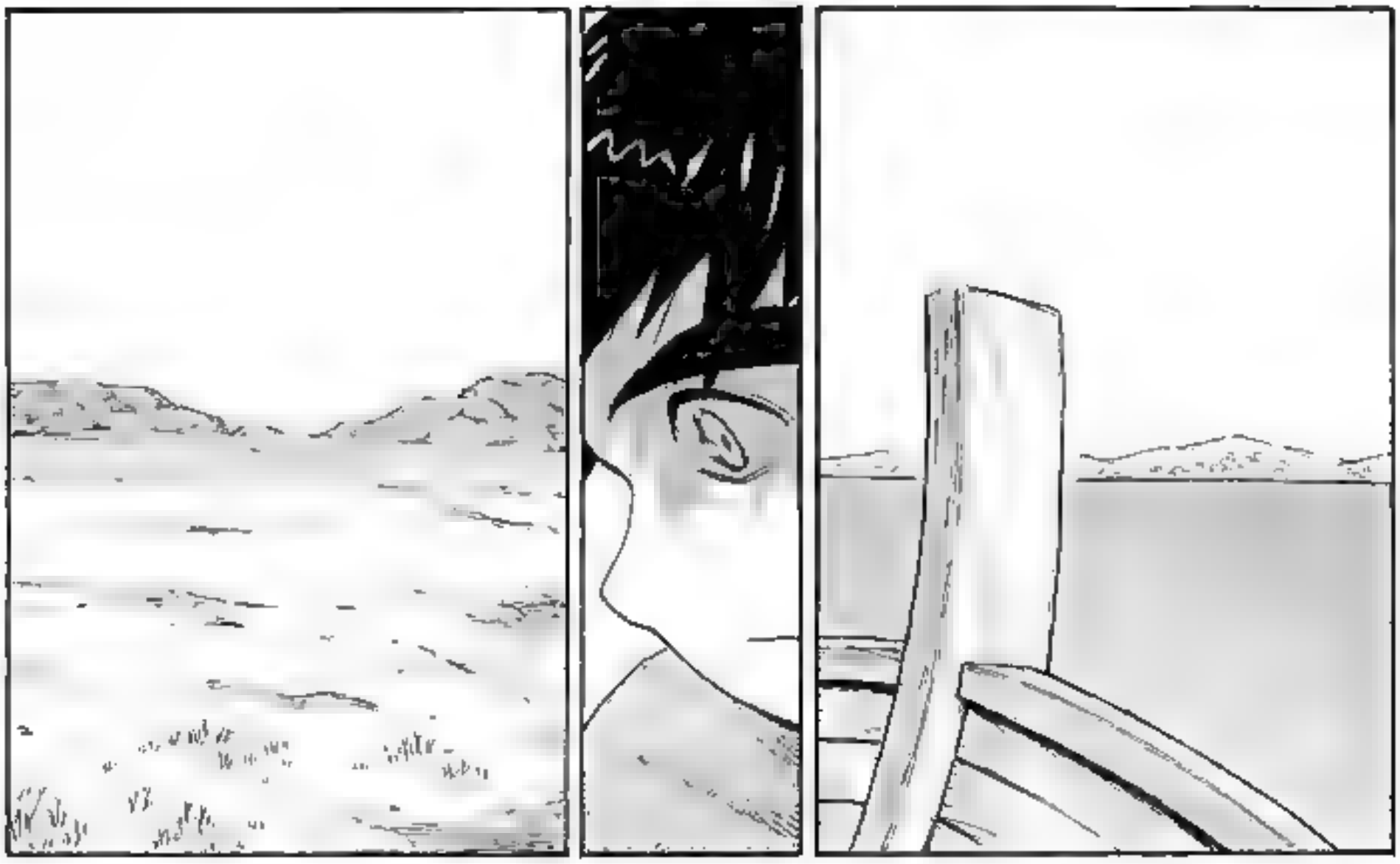
PACKAGE: SUPER LIGHT PAPER CLAY

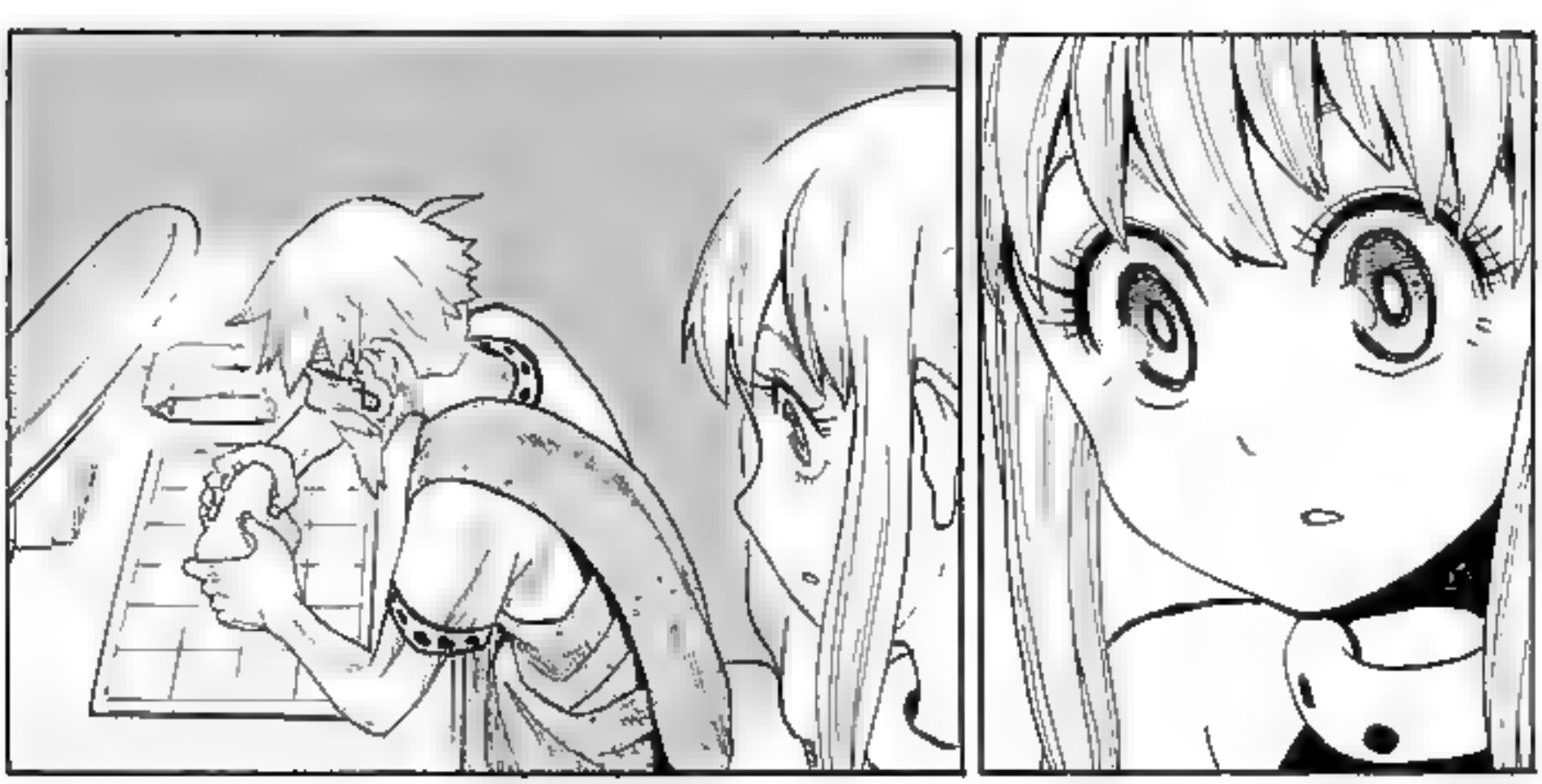
230

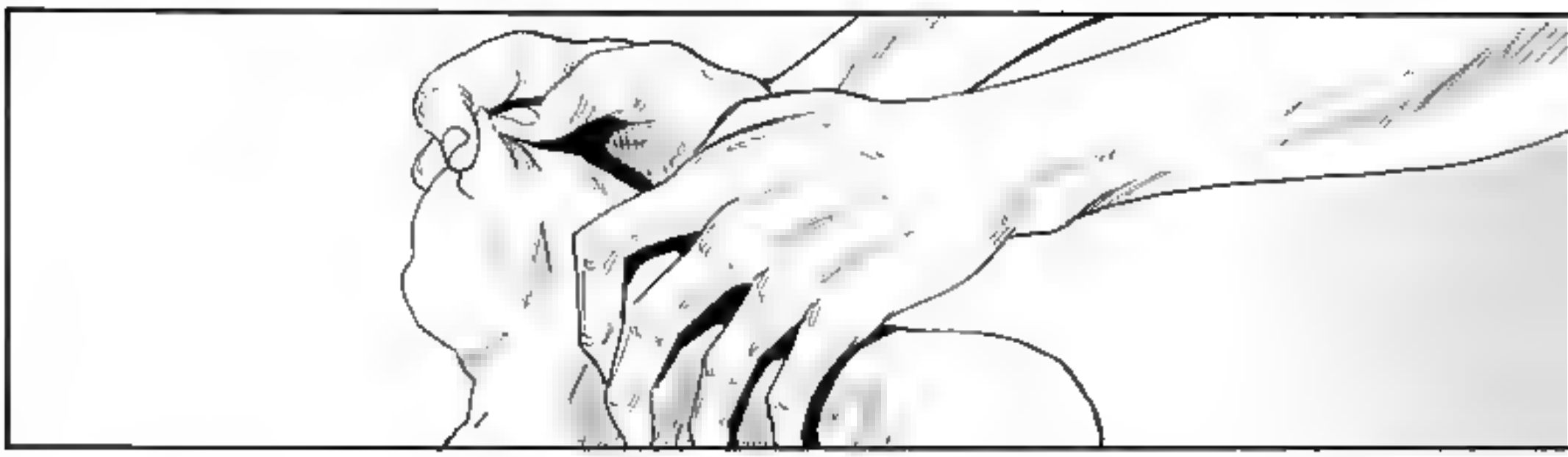
YES...

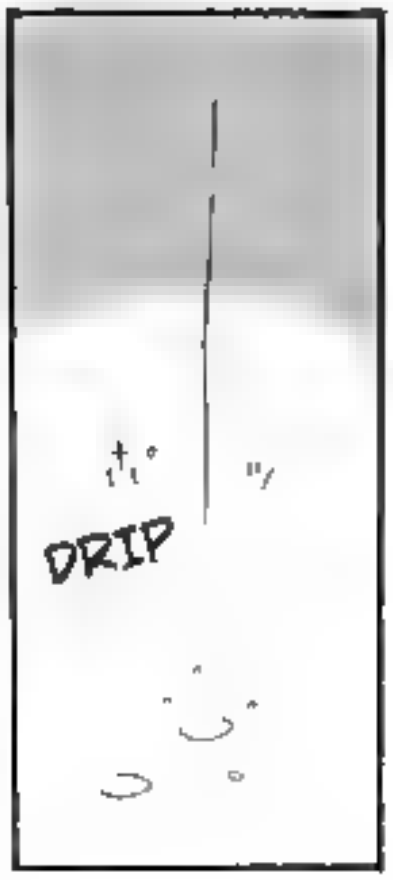
BUT CAN I WATCH WHAT YOU'RE DOING?

OF COURSE, MASTER.








DRIP

WHY...
WHY AM I
CRYING...?

URGHHH.

JRGH.

FUH..
HNGH.

LIHA-
NELA...

KIRTI-
NOS..

HALA-
RA.

LOCA...

ARBOL...

WHY
ARE WE...
ALIVE...?

HEY..
RUNE...

CLACK

YOU WERE UP LATE DOING SOMETHING LAST NIGHT...

DAD ...?

HUH ...?

DID YOU MAKE THIS, FUUTA?

INTER-ESTING.

A CAT-FACED SPHINX?

OH? WHAT'S THIS...?

HMMM...

THIS IS SOME CRAFTS-MANSHIP, THOUGH.

MAS-TER!

I'M GLAD YOU'RE BACK TO NORMAL.

I WASN'T PRETEND-ING...

OH, I'M BETTER.

HUH? DONE PRETENDING TO BE AN OLD MAN?

THAT THING YOU'VE BEEN DOING SINCE THE OTHER DAY

I GUESS...

YEAH.

YAWN

YOU'LL WORK IN MY WORK-SHOP WHEN YOU GROW UP.

YOU'RE BACK, FLORS.

YOU'LL MAKE FIGURES WHEN YOU GROW UP.

PROB-ABLY..

.. BECAUSE SOMETHING GOOD WILL HAPPEN.

WHY ARE WE ALIVE...?

A LITTLE TIRED...

BUT I'LL MANAGE.

YOU GOT OVER YOUR PAST SHOCK.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

JUST A LITTLE...

A LITTLE.

TALKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED LATER IS EXHAUSTING AND DIFFICULT, BUT

SEEING PAST LIVES IS ROUGH.

..I FEEL LIKE IT'S NOT SO BAD.

...AND THE PAST AND EVERYTHING, IT'S NOT ALL BAD... I GUESS. .

IT'S A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, BUT WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE PRESENT...

IT'S THAT... EVERYTHING'S CONNECTED...

I'LL TAKE A PROPER BREAK THIS TIME.

ROAR

IN ANY CASE, I WOULDN'T MIND DOING IT AGAIN.

I DIDN'T SEE HER THIS TIME.

I WANT TO SEE REI AGAIN, TOO.

THIS HAND-OUT YOU TURNED IN THE OTHER DAY.

THERE YOU ARE. DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?

YOU MEAN ME?

OH, AZUMA-SENSEI.

.BUT IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.

I DON'T REALLY CARE HOW YOU FEEL...

...HUH.

MY MISTAKE. IT'S VANN...

OH, MY NAME'S NOT FLORS.

BUT.. WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

2-C ΦOUPOOU

YOU WROTE THE WRONG NAME.

THIS IS YOURS, RIGHT? I COULDN'T FIND ANOTHER ONE.

THIS SAYS FLORS?

..IT'S NOT THAT .. EITHER..

IT'S NOT VANN EITHER. IT'S FONE...

...

I COM-PLETELY FORGOT... HA HA HA.

OKE. OH, RIGHT!! OKEYA FUUTA!!

WHAT'S WRONG, OKEYA-KUN?

O-
OKAY...

REWRITE
YOUR NAME
AND TURN IT
IN AGAIN.

I KNOW...
HA HA
HA...

I'M AMAZED
YOU FORGOT
YOUR OWN
NAME.

. .DID
I...

JUST
NOW..

...WHO
I AM?

..FORGET ..

SPIRIT CIRCLE 2/FIN

CONTINUED IN VOLUME 3

スピリットサークル
魂環

SPIRIT CIRCLE

Spirit Circle

Satoshi Mizukami

03

[CIRCLE 15]

I...

I DIDN'T MAKE IT IN TIME...

NO..

HAA..

HAH..

HUFF..

WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!

KOKO...

WHY...

FOR-TUNA...

スピリットサークル 魂環

CIRCLE 15
HOUTAROU 1

水上悟志
SATOSHI MIZUKAMI

Spirit Circle

WHY DID I DO THIS..?

...?

WELL, BECAUSE...

WHY ?

...TUNA!!

FOR..

CLASH

THAT MY FATHER...!!

IT'S YOUR FAULT THAT EAST--!

EVEN IF IT TAKES A THOUSAND YEARS...

...OR TEN THOUSAND...

...END YOUR CURSE!!

I...

...WILL...

SLIP

SPLOOSH

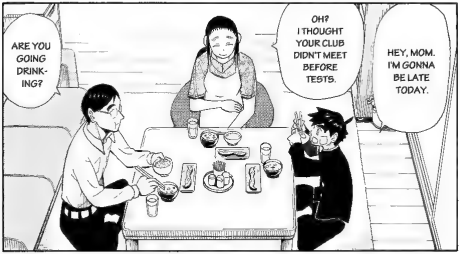
WHOA!!

SOMETHING HAPPENED TO EAST... BECAUSE OF ME...?

A DREAM...

...

THANKS FOR THE FOOD.


ARE YOU GOING DRINK-ING?
OH? I THOUGHT YOUR CLUB DIDN'T MEET BEFORE TESTS.
HEY, MOM. I'M GONNA BE LATE TODAY.

IF YOU'RE STUDYING HISTORY, TAKE MY COPIES OF NAPOLEON: MILITARY CONQUEST WITH YOU.
OKEYA TOUKICHI (37)
REALLY? GOOD FOR YOU
OKEYA SAWA (36)
I'M STUDYING FOR MY MIDTERM EXAMS.
OF COURSE NOT.
OKEYA FUUTA (14)

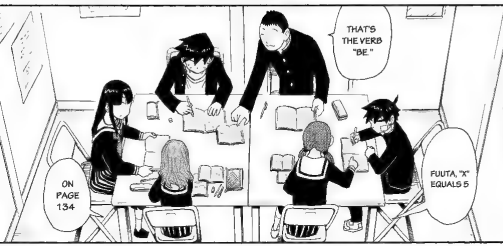
THE TEST DOESN'T EVEN COVER NAPOLEON.
COMICS WILL TEACH YOU EVERYTHING IMPORTANT.
THOSE ARE COMICS.
MY UNBORN BROTHER (OR SISTER?) MAY BE SOMEONE I KNOW, TOO.
I HAVEN'T MET MOM YET... BUT MAYBE I ALREADY HAVE.
DAD
I MET MY FATHER IN A PAST LIFE.
DAISE MOSHA, TOKUGAWA IEYASU.
HIDETORE!
BE YOUR EVE NEAR SUN.
HYOUJU UZAKU.
AS LONG AS I'VE GOT MY LIQUOR...
WELL... WHO CARES ABOUT HIM?
HUH? I CAN'T REMEMBER HIS FACE OR HIS NAME.
YOU KNOW VANN'S BROTHER, THE GUY WHO SENT ASSASSINS AFTER HIM.
MY BROTHER... I HOPE IT'S NOT HIM

...DID I SAY SOME-THING?
!
...
...WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, FUUTA?
WHAT?
THAT'S PLAIN WATER.
...
WHO IS HE TRYING TO BE?
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER
OUR SON'S BEEN ACTING WEIRD LATELY... HE WAS PRETENDING TO BE AN OLD MAN
I CAN HEAR YOU.
REEL
ARE YOU OKAY?
MAS-TER?
OKEYA FUUTA...
I AM OKEYA FUUTA.
SHAKE

I AM OKEYA FUUTA...
YOU DON'T LOOK WELL.
MAS-TER?

SIGN: STUDY ROOM A

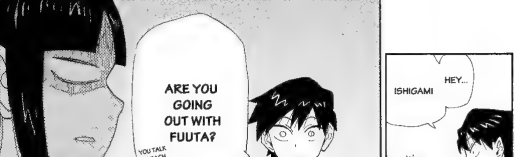
SIGN: LIBRARY



TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH, FUUTA!! I FIGURED THAT OUT BEFORE SUMMER BREAK.
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG, IDIOT!!
I'LL NEVER UNDER-STAND THIS!
YOU IDIOT!!
REALLY?
I SEE.. I GET IT NOW.

SORRY FOR MAKING YOU COME, KOKO-CHAN.
ARE WE TOO ROWDY?
WELL, YEAH. I GUESS SO.
NO.

IS IT ALWAYS YOU FIVE?
SEE YOU LATER.
I'M GOING TO THE BATHROOM.


ARE YOU GOING OUT WITH FUUTA?
YOU TALK TO EACH OTHER IN SECRET
YOU GO HOME TOGETHER A LOT
HEY...
ISHIGAMI

SNAP
THIS IS YOUR ANSWER. FIGURE IT OUT.
WHA... YOU ..
YOU CAN'T THAT OUT OF THE BLUE
TET-SU!!
HUH?
HUH? DID I DO SOME-THING WRONG?
WHAT?

WHICH IS IT...?
SEEMS COMPLICATED.
I-I DON'T GET IT, BUT FINE, I WON'T ASK AGAIN.
WHOA.

I AM WHO I AM
THEY ARE WHO THEY ARE.
DON'T GET CONFUSED
!!
....

TOILET
FUUTA-KUN.

MY HANDS ?
DON'T LOOK IN MIRRORS FOR SELF-AFFIRMATION.
!
EAST...
I RECOMMEND LOOKING AT YOUR HANDS.

I DON'T ALWAYS BOTHER TO HIDE IT. IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME.
SHE FIGURED OUT WHO I WAS BECAUSE OF THE MARK ON MY CHEEK.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SHOWN MYSELF TO YOU.
IT'S MY FAULT THAT KOUKO REALIZED YOUR TRUE IDENTITY.
WHAT?
WHA..
..DO SOME-THING TO YOU?
DID I...
THAT MY FATHER ...!!
IT'S YOUR FAULT THAT EAST...
BUT...
IT'S FINE.
MORE IMPOR-TANTLY...
IT WAS FORTUNA.
..IT WASN'T YOU
!
YOU MUSTN'T SAY THAT!
FUUTA-KUN!!
THEY'RE BOTH ME.

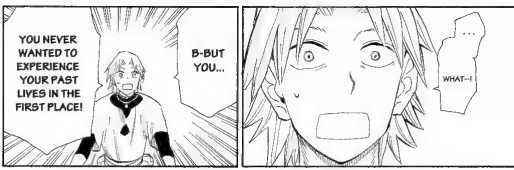
YOU MUST NOT FORGET...
...THAT YOU ARE YOU...!!
YOU'RE OKEYA FUUTA-KUN!!
YOU'RE NOT FORTUNA!!

...
SO, WHAT DID I—ER, FORTUNA DO TO YOU?
...
UM...
OH... OKAY...

...TO SAVE ME.
YOU ONLY TRIED...
BUT...
?
...

I'M THE ONE WHO HAD THE MOST TROUBLE DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN YOU
..AND FOR-TUNA
SEEING YOU BROUGHT BACK MEMORIES, AND I SHOWED MYSELF TO YOU
BESIDES... NOW THAT FORTUNA'S SOUL HAD MATURED THROUGH MULTIPLE REBIRTHS ..
..I THOUGHT HE MIGHT SAVE KOUKO
!
...SAVE HER?
BUT I WAS WRONG.
VANN... I MEAN, FOR...
NO, I MEAN...
AT THIS RATE, YOU'LL SINK INTO YOUR PAST SELVES.
THE "OBLIVION OF REINCARNATION" MOST LIKELY EXISTS TO HEAL TIRED SOULS...
...AND IT'S PROOF THAT ONE MUST ALWAYS HAVE THE STRENGTH TO LIVE IN THE "PRESENT"
FUUTA-KUN! YOU MUST NOT WITNESS ANY MORE PAST LIVES!!
YOU HAVE TO STOP THIS!

I'M GONNA SEE THEM.
NO WAY.


YOU NEVER WANTED TO EXPERIENCE YOUR PAST LIVES IN THE FIRST PLACE!
B-BUT YOU...
...
WHAT--!

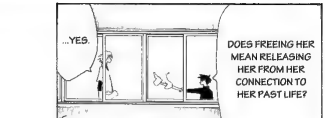
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER, THEN?
BECAUSE I MAY BE ABLE TO SAVE ISHIGAKI-SAN.
THEN WHY..?!
...
HMM...
I GUESS

KOUKO... BELIEVES HERSELF TO BE "KOKO."
THE KOKO OF THE PAST WHO LIVED WITH ME, FORTUNA, AND RUNE.
AND...SHE'S CURRENTLY LIVING THE CONTINUATION OF THAT LIFE.

BECAUSE OF THIS THING.
ROAAAR

DOES FREEING HER MEAN RELEASING HER FROM HER CONNECTION TO HER PAST LIFE?
...YES.

A SPIRIT CIRCLE...!!


UNTIL JUST A FEW DAYS AGO, I THOUGHT...
...I WOULDN'T MIND SEEING A LITTLE MORE OF MY PAST LIVES.
BUT NOW...

I'LL DO IT.
I FEEL EVEN MORE MOTIVATED.

I WON'T LET FORTUNA BEAT ME!
LEAVE IT TO ME, EAST.
Y-YOU LOOK DETERMINED, BUT YOUR MOTIVATION IS VAGUE!

NOT EVEN FLORS!!
THUD
NOT FONE...
NOT VANN.

YOU...
REALLY MIGHT!
YOU...
I CAME TO STOP YOU, BUT INSTEAD YOU'VE WON MY SUPPORT.
YOU TRULY ARE AMAZING.
I GUESS... IT'S SORT OF OUR DESTINY OR SOMETHING.
BESIDES, IF EVERYTHING RESOLVES NICELY...
WELL, IT'LL WORK OUT.
MAYBE WE'D EVEN END UP DATING.
FARE-WELL..
THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY...
SHIMMER

SHIMMER

OH.
UH...
WHO KNOWS?
OW!
MY NECK!
GRAB
KEEP TALKING NONSENSE AND I'LL PUSH YOU OFF A HIGH PLACE AGAIN.
STOMP
STOMP

JUST WHO DO YOU THINK...
...WILL END UP DATING?

YOU CHILD..
WHAT ARE YOU BLUSHING ABOUT?
...
EVERYONE'S SO HUNG UP ON ROMANCE.
SEE YOU LATER.
BYE.
BYE.
LATER.
UNTIL I TALKED TO EAST AND GOT MOTIVATED, THINGS WEREN'T LOOKING TOO GOOD.
LOOKING AT MY HANDS DOES CALM ME DOWN.
I FELT LIKE CONSCIOUS-NESSES OTHER THAN MY OWN WERE SPREADING LIKE STAINS INSIDE ME.
ESPE-CIALLY..
HANDS.
...

MORE THAN FLORS OR VANN WHO LED LONG LIVES...
FONE...
...I FEEL LIKE FONE'S SENSE OF SELF IS STRONGER.

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF.
NOT "YOU."
YOU CAN'T LET GO OF THE PAST EITHER, FONE.
...AND SHE NEVER LETS GO OF THE PAST.
SHE'S A BORE LOSER, SHE'S ANNOYING...
...AND SAYING CRUEL THINGS.
ALWAYS HITTING PEOPLE...
THAT WOMAN...
THERE'S NO NEED TO SAVE HER. IT'S A PAIN IN THE ASS.
WHAT ORDINARY LOW-PLANTS.

thanks
OH I FORGOT.
GOOD WORK, RUNE.
I KNOW
HEH HEH
MASTER, MASTER.
DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER ASK YOU TO PICK UP MILK?
I WISH HE'D SHUT UP

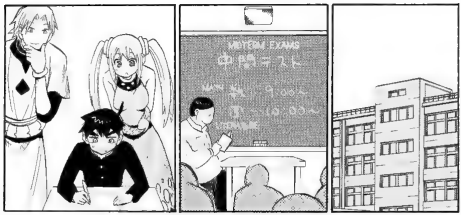
OH.
OH.
MILK!!
BOOZE.
I REMEMBERED I HAD TO BUY SOMETHING AND TURNED BACK.
SEE YOU LATER.
ISN'T YOUR PLACE IN THE OTHER DIRECTION?
THANK YOU.
DO YOU EVER FORGET WHO YOU ARE?
UH, UM .. LISTEN, ISHIGAKI-SAN.
WHAT?
WAIT ..
HEY.
BY "ME," YOU MEAN THE "KOKO" OF THE PAST?
I AM ALWAYS ME.
...I'M ME.

THEN WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE OTHER FOUR?
TETSU AND THE OTHERS.
NOTHING IN PARTIC-ULAR.
I THINK THEY'RE ALL GOOD PEOPLE.
BUT...
ARBOL AND HALARA..
OH, I GET IT...
NOT REALLY.
I DON'T REALLY THINK ANYTHING ABOUT THEM
I JUST THINK THIS IS HOW WE MET THIS TIME.
BESIDES THOSE FOUR, I'VE MET LOTS OF OTHER PEOPLE IN PLENTY OF OTHER FORMS.
BUT WHAT ABOUT ME...?
YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU'RE SPECIAL.
BECAUSE YOU WERE THE BEGINNING.
SO MASTER IS SPECIAL TO YOU
IT'S SO NICE TO BE YOUNG
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!

AND RUNE, DON'T SAY WEIRD STUFF EITHER.
BYE.
SHUT UP, [illegible] I HOPE YOU DIE!
FEEL LIKE YOU'RE SPEC--

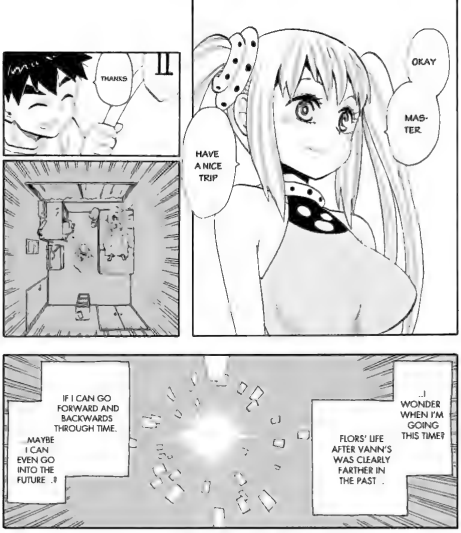
MAYBE... IT'S FORTUNA WHO THINKS ISHIGAKI-SAN IS SPECIAL.

I WILL DISCOVER.
..YOUR TRUE IDENTITIES !!
SPACE PICA


MIDTERM EXAMS

THE END OF OCTOBER

I'M GONNA GO.
OKAY
SLAP


THANKS
OKAY
MAS-
TER.
HAVE
A NICE
TRIP
IF I CAN GO FORWARD AND BACKWARDS THROUGH TIME.
..MAYBE I CAN EVEN GO INTO THE FUTURE ..!
FLORS' LIFE AFTER VANIN'S WAS CLEARLY FARTHER IN THE PAST .
..I WONDER WHEN I'M GOING THIS TIME?
...!!
REI...
I DON'T CARE WHERE I GO
I'D JUST LIKE TO SEE HER AGAIN
NO

HUH. ?
...
CHAPTER FIVE
OH
YOU'RE AWAKE
DON'T MAKE A SOUND
IF WE KILL YOU, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO COLLECT OUR RANSOM. .
..HOU-TAROU-SAN.
WHAT ..?
HOUTAROU

スピリットサークル
魂環
SPIRIT CIRCLE

AZUMA-SENSEI

吾妻先生

CIRCLE 16
HOUTAROU 2

I-I TOLD THEM.
THAT WE'D KILL THE HOSTAGE IF THEY DIDN'T BRING THE RANSOM BY FOUR?
YOU'RE SURE YOU TOLD THEM, RIGHT?
THEY'RE LATE!

...YOU WON'T GET A RANSOM FOR ME.
WHAT?
THAT'S RIGHT. THESE GUYS KIDNAPPED ME, AND
A RAN-SOM..?
HUMPH.
MY HEAD'S CLEARING UP.
THROB THROB
OW.

SOMEONE WAS BEHIND THIS AFTER ALL.
THE BLACK HOOD..
SIGH...
IF WE KIDNAP YOU, LORD FURAN WILL PAY ANY AMOUNT TO GET YOU BACK.
THE MAN IN THE BLACK HOOD TOLD ME SO.
HOUTAROU, THE MAN WITH A SCAR ON HIS LEFT CHEEK... IT'S GOTTA BE YOU!!
HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU SIGHING FOR?
WHO..
WHO ARE YOU?!
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING.
GO AWAY.
SHOVE
AN ENVOY?
WHO'S THAT?
?
WHOOSH

SPLOOSH
WHUMPH
SPURT
SLASH
SHUFFLE

SWING
SMASH
WH-WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!

FLAP
PSSHHT
TOTTER
SWIP
WOW...
WO--
WHEW
Y-YEAH I DID IT
YOU'RE KAJIMA HOUTAROU-SAN?
I AM.
WHO ARE YOU?
THEY HIRED ME TO PROTECT YOU.
I'M JINKUROU THE NINJA!!
NICE TO MEET YOU!

DON'T YOU KNOW WANT TO KNOW WHO HIRED A NINJA TO SAVE YOU?!
DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY THE GUY IN THE BLACK HOOD HAD THOSE WANDERING SAMURAI KIDNAP YOU?!
CAN'T YOU ACT MORE SURPRISED?
THAT'S IT?!
REALLY? THANKS.
YOU SAVED ME.
I WAS JUST TOLD TO PROTECT YOU
TRUTH IS, I DON'T KNOW. WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOU DON'T KNOW?!
YOU KNOW?!
I KNOW THE ANSWER TO BOTH OF THOSE QUESTIONS.
...
ACTU-ALLY..
GRIN
PRO-TECT ME...
...
YOU'RE COMING TO MY PLACE?
WELL, THERE WILL BE TIME FOR YOU TO TELL ME LATER.
IS YOUR PLACE NEARBY? I'M GONNA STAY WITH YOU FOR A WHILE
I COULDN'T PROTECT YOU OTHERWISE.
I SAID I'D PROTECT YOU.

SCRUB
YOU LIVE HERE ALONE?
YEAH
SORRY I CAN'T OFFER YOU WITH MORE.
I OWE YOU MY LIFE.
IT'S FINE, IT'S FINE.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IT'S MY JOB.
IS THAT TEA?
HOT WATER.
BLAH
WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GUY WHO HIRED ME?
WHO'S THE MAN IN THE BLACK HOOD?
WHY WERE THEY AFTER YOU?
SO?
WHAT A STRANGE MAN.
HE'S TALKATIVE, OVERLY FRIENDLY, AND TOOK THOSE SAMURAI HEAD ON.
HE HE DOESN'T SEEM MUCH LIKE A NINJA.
HOU-TA-ROU!
HEY!
HUH?
THAT'S A LOT TO ANSWER AT ONCE.
YOU'RE A NINJA. FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOUR.

TUP TUP TUP
HOU-TA-ROU!!
PRIN-CESS?!
COUGH
PRINCESS... YOU'RE CAME OUT HERE DRESSED LIKE THAT AGAIN.
URGH!!
GRAB
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!!
THANK GOOD-NESS!
JUMP
THE FURAN FAMILY HAS THE LORD AND KAJIROU-SAMA...
A-ALONE...
IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO YOU, I'D BE ALL ALONE IN THE WORLD!!
SHUT UP!!

MY ONLY BROTHER IS YOU, HOUTAROU!!
I DON'T LIKE MY FATHER OR KAJIROU!!
MY ONLY FAMILY...

THE FURAN FAMILY CAN GO TO HELL!
FEH!
PRIN-CESS!!

EX-CUSE ME.
BOW
OH.

BRO-THER?
WHAT?

I AM GRATEFUL.
JIN-KUROU-DONO.

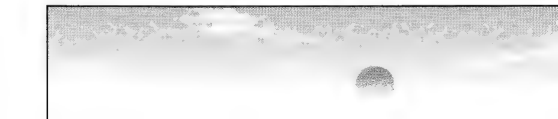
...

...!, JINKUROU, HAVE RESCUED HOUTAROU-DONO.
AS PER YOUR REQUEST, PRINCESS...

PRINCESS RIHAMA.
NO PROBLEM.
JIN-KUROU-DONO.
I SHALL CALL ON YOU AGAIN.

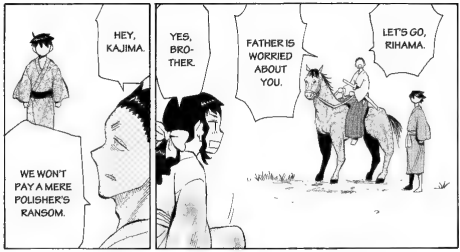
WAIT A MINUTE...
THEN THE MAN IN THE BLACK HOOD MUST BE "HIM."
THE PRINCESS HIRED SOMEONE TO PROTECT ME.
I KNEW IT

WHY ARE THEY JUST STARING AT EACH OTHER...?
CHIRP
I CAN'T BREATHE

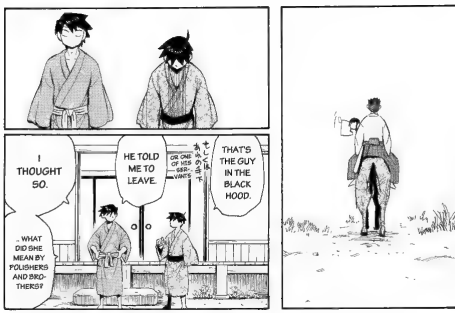


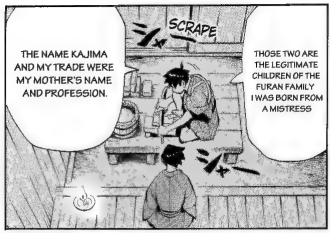
I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME HERE!
YOU'RE HERE AGAIN?!
NEIGH
RIHA-MA!!
KA-JIROU-SAMA.
TSK.
BOW
KA-JIMA.
I HEARD YOU WERE KIDNAPPED BY WANDERING SAMURAI
..WELL, YES.
YOU SEEM TO BE ALIVE.
BOW
THIS MAN SAVED HOUTAROU.
TSK.
MY NAME IS JINKUROU
HEH.
AS HE'S QUITE DEPEND-ABLE
HE WILL BE STAYING HERE FOR A WHILE...

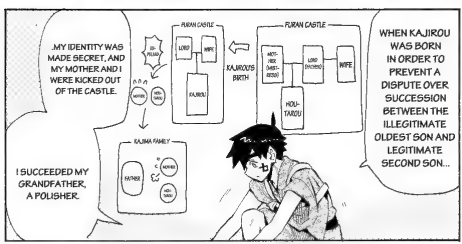
...I SEE.
THANK YOU FOR RESCUING OUR CASTLE'S FAVORED POLISHER.
I SHALL REWARD YOU.
AP-PROACH.
NOW LEAVE.
CLINK
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
...
MUTTER
RONIN..
YOU'LL REGRET THIS
THIS IS TOO MUCH.
I ONLY DID WHAT ANY-ONE WOULD HAVE DONE.
!
SHUFFLE
BOW
GLANCE


HEY, KAJIMA.
WE WON'T PAY A MERE POLISHER'S RANSOM.
YES, BRO-THER.
FATHER IS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
LET'S GO, RIHAMA.

THANKS TO YOU.
YOU GOT LUCKY.


I THOUGHT SO.
HE TOLD ME TO LEAVE.
THAT'S THE GUY IN THE BLACK HOOD.
.. WHAT DID SHE MEAN BY POLISHERS AND BRO-THERS?


SCRAPE
THE NAME KAJIMA AND MY TRADE WERE MY MOTHER'S NAME AND PROFESSION.
THOSE TWO ARE THE LEGITIMATE CHILDREN OF THE FURAN FAMILY I WAS BORN FROM A MISTRESS


MY IDENTITY WAS MADE SECRET, AND MY MOTHER AND I WERE KICKED OUT OF THE CASTLE.
I SUCCEEDED MY GRANDFATHER, A POLISHER.
FURAN CASTLE
LORD
WIFE
KAJIROU'S BIRTH
KAJIROU
KAJIMA FAMILY
FATHER
MOTHER
FURAN CASTLE
MOTHER (MISTRESS)
LORD (FATHER)
WIFE
YOU-TAROU
WHEN KAJIROU WAS BORN IN ORDER TO PREVENT A DISPUTE OVER SUCCESSION BETWEEN THE ILLEGITIMATE OLDEST SON AND LEGITIMATE SECOND SON...

KAJIROU BELIEVES I WANT TO BE THE HEIR AND HATES ME.
THE PRINCESS HATES HER BROTHER FOR HATING ME.
KAJIMA
FURAN
I'M THE HEIR!
DISLIKE
HATRED
HALF-SIBLINGS
RIHAMA, WHO WAS BORN LATER, TREATS ME MORE LIKE A BROTHER THAN KAJIROU...

I HEARD YOU'RE OUR BROTHER.
YOU'RE HOUTAROU.
P-PRIN-CESS?!
..SINCE THEY WERE CHILDREN
THEY'VE KNOWN...
WHO KNOWS?
I THOUGHT IT WAS A SECRET
HOW DO THEY KNOW ABOUT YOU?
YEAH
I DO.
SO.
DO YOU DRINK?
..HAH
STRANGELY ENOUGH..

THE POLISHING WORK HE TAUGHT ME IS SURPRISINGLY INTERESTING.
YOU CREATE PATTERNS IN THE BLADE.
MY MOTHER HATED LOOKING AT THE SCAR ON MY CHEEK. WE WERE NEVER CLOSE, BUT MY GRANDFATHER WAS GOOD TO ME.
MY MOTHER AND GRAND-FATHER DIED OF ILLNESS.

STRANGELY ENOUGH, I ENJOYED DRINKING WITH JINKUROU.

WHILE I WAS FRYING FISH BY THE RIVER, I SUDDENLY HEARD SOMEONE BEHIND ME SAY, "LET ME HAVE SOME."
SEEMS LIKE SHE SNEAKS OUT OF THE CASTLE AND WALKS AROUND A LOT.
UNTIL PRINCESS RIHAMA PICKED ME UP RECENTLY, I WAS A WANDERER.
TOKUGAWA WAS CRITICAL OF THE PLACE I USED TO WORK, SO WE GOT SHUT DOWN.

...BUT EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE ONLY TWO OF US, I FELT LIKE THREE OF US WERE DRINKING.
MIGHT HAVE BEEN JUST ME

EVEN THOUGH WE'D ONLY MET TODAY, WE TALKED A LOT.

DON'T FORGET YOUR PLACE.
AND YOU ARE A POLISHER.
I AM THE LEGITIMATE HEIR TO THE FURAN FAMILY.

CLATTER...
WHY ARE YOU AFRAID OF ME?
AS THE LEGITIMATE SON, YOU'RE THE HEIR TO THE FURAN FAMILY.
KAJI-ROU.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DOESN'T UNDERSTAND HIS PLACE.
ALL I WANT IS TO BE A POLISHER MY WHOLE LIFE

THEY'RE ASSASSINS THEY'RE NOT LIKE THE SCUM WE ENCOUNTERED THIS AFTER-NOON
BACK ME UP.
WH-WHO, ME...?!
THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE OUTSIDE
QUIET
!!
JIN-KU...
THEY DON'T EXPECT YOU TO FIGHT BACK. WE'LL TAKE THEM BY SURPRISE AND TURN THEIR SURPRISE ATTACK ON THEM
G-GOT IT...!!
THEY DON'T CONSIDER YOU A THREAT.
IF THEY DID, THEY'D SEND THREE OR FOUR GUYS.

SWISH
SHFF...
?!
CLANG
AHH!!
SHAK

KACHANG
!!
!!
WE FAIL-ED!!
RUN!!
HE BLOCKED IT?!
WHACK
CLANG
CHING
DASH!
CLANG
YOU WON'T ESCAPE!!

WHUD
AT LEAST HOUTA-ROU CAN ESCAPE...
SHIT.
CLANG
OVER-HEAD STANCE!!
LOWER STANCE!!

SPIN

WHAM

TSK.
RE-TREAT!!
...!!
THEY SWAPPED PLACES IN AN INSTANT?!

...

PROFESSIONALS DON'T HESITATE TO RETREAT
WHEW!!

PROBABLY.
DIDN'T HE OFFER YOU MORE MONEY THAN THE PRINCESS?
...WHY DID YOU REFUSE KAJIROU WHEN HE TOLD YOU TO LEAVE?

WAY STRONGER THAN THE GUYS FROM THIS AFTERNOON
THEY'RE STRONG.

MY BODY MOVED ON ITS OWN LIKE I'D PRACTICED THE MOVE A BUNCH OF TIMES BEFORE!
ME, TOO!
I HAD AN EPIPHANY THE MOMENT OUR BACKS TOUCHED!
I WAS

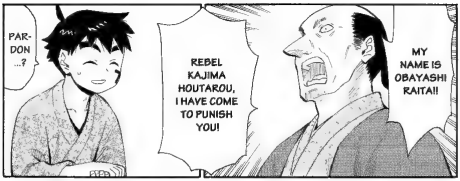
CIRCLE 16/END

スピリットサークル
魂環
SPIRIT CIRCLE

FATHER
12

CIRCLE 17
HOUTAROU 3

EXCUSE ME.
EXCUSE ME.
EX-CUSE ME.
IS THERE A KAJIMA HOUTAROU HERE?
YES, SIR.
RIGHT HERE.
RATTLE RATTLE
RATTLE RATTLE
HUMPH.
WEL-COME.
ARE YOU HERE TO HAVE SOMETHING POLISHED?


PAR-
DON
...?
REBEL
KAJIMA
HOUTAROU,
I HAVE COME
TO PUNISH
YOU!
MY
NAME IS
OBAYASHI
RAITA!!

PAR-
DON
...?!
ずしっ
CLINK

YOU'RE
UNARMED.
USE THIS.
I'LL USE THE
SHORTER
ONE.

LET'S
HAVE
A FAIR
FIGHT!!
WHAT?!
ドドドドド
DASH!

VERY
WELL.
ぬっ...
LOOM

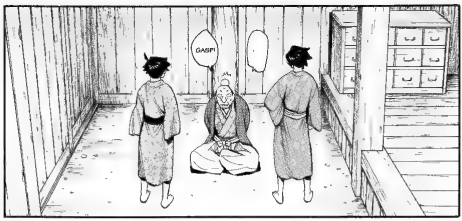
GLANG

SHUFFLE
STEP
!

WHAT A SHOCK! I DIDN'T EXPECT AN ASSASSIN TO SHOW UP IN BROAD DAYLIGHT!
AND WHY'D HE BOTHER TO KNOCK ON MY DOOR, ANYWAY?
HE'S AN ASSASSIN.
...

...
HRAAH!!
AA
A
AH!
KLONK
ACK
--!!
WUMPH

HEY
I'M BACK
ARE YOU OKAY?
Y-YEAH, JINKUROU
WEL-COME BACK.
IS THIS OLD GUY AN ASSASSIN HIRED BY THE FURAN FAMILY?
WHY'D HE COME IN THE AFTERNOON?
WELL, WHAT-EVER.


GASP!

THERE'S SOMETHING WE WANT TO ASK YOU BEFORE WE KILL YOU.
GOOD MORN-ING.
YOU'RE AWAKE.

HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF? AN ASSASSIN?
YEAH, YEAH WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HE SAID HIS NAME'S OBAYASHI RAITA.
YOU--!
YOU ATTACKED ME FROM BEHIND, YOU COWARD!

I AM A WARRIOR!
...OBAYASHI RAITA!!
I AM VASSAL OF THE FURAN FAMILY...
I'M NO ASSASSIN!!

...THERE'S A REBEL TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE FAMILY.
RIGHT?
I'M SURE KAJIROU TOLD YOU...
I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT AN ASSASSIN.

THEN WHY ARE YOU WORKING AS AN ASSASSIN?
A WARRIOR?

THINGS ARE LIVELY AROUND HERE THIS MORNING.
PRINCESS!!

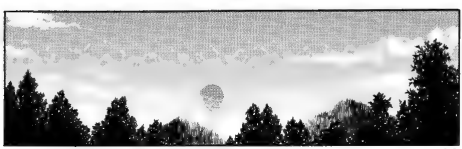
HOUTAROU...
JINKUROU...

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?!
IS THIS GUY STUPID, OR WHAT?
MORON.

YEAH, THIS GUY'S STUPID.
WHEW...
YOU'RE NOT? EXCELLENT!
MORON.
OF COURSE NOT.
ARE YOU LEADING THE PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE FURAN FAMILY?!
COULD IT BE?!
PRINCESS RIHAMA?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

FORGIVE THEM.
THERE IS NO NEED FOR YOU TO KILL THEM.
MY BROTHER LIED BECAUSE HE'S JEALOUS OF THEM.
HE THINKS IT'S BROTHERLY LOVE.
THESE TWO ARE MY FRIENDS.

SURE.
OKAY, HOUTAROU.
UNTIE HIM.
I SEE. I UNDERSTAND.
QUICK CHANGE



NOW, OBAYASHI.
INSTRUCT THESE TWO... ESPECIALLY HOUTAROU, IN SWORDSMANSHIP.
I'LL CLEAR THINGS UP WITH MY BROTHER.
YES, MA'AM!!
AS YOU WISH, PRINCESS.
HUH..?
HUH..?

WELL, THEN.
I'LL BE LEAVING
PRINCESS
CHEER UP, BROTHER.
WHISPER
STUDY HARD.
OBAYASHI MAY NOT BE SMART, BUT HE'S A SKILLED SWORDSMAN.

THE PRINCESS MUSTN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE BENEATH HER..
YEAH..
THEY'RE STARING AT EACH OTHER AGAIN.

YES, MA'AM.
LEAVE IT TO ME.
JINKUROU-DONO, I APPRECIATE YOUR CONTINUED SERVICE.

TO SOME LORD?
MAR-RIED?
...
BESIDES, THE PRINCESS WILL EVENTUALLY BE MARRIED TO A DISTINGUISHED LORD...
LOVE?
WHAT?
SHE'S A PRINCESS
YOU'RE RIGHT
YEAH
WHAT'S WRONG? ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
THEN THOSE TWO...
THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S ONLY NATURAL

BY DAY, WE SWUNG WOODEN SWORDS
DAYS PASSED
BY NIGHT, WE SWUNG REAL SWORDS.
HOW-EVER, THE ASSASSINS DIDN'T COME FRE QUENTLY.
THEY WOULD COME OCCASIONALLY IN TWOS AND THREES AS IF IT HAD SLIPPED THEIR MINDS UNTIL NOW
HE MUST'VE ONLY HIRED THOSE PRO-FESSIONALS FOR THE DAY.
AND HE'S A CHEAP-SKATE.
NONE OF THEM ARE PROPER FOLLOWERS
ALL THE OTHERS WERE RUFFIANS.
PROFES-SIONALS ONLY CAME THE FIRST NIGHT.
NOT EVERY PATRON'S SO WEALTHY HE CAN EMPLOY YOU FOR LIFE.
OF COURSE YOU CAN
YOU CAN DO THAT?
HIRE FOLLOWERS FOR A DAY?

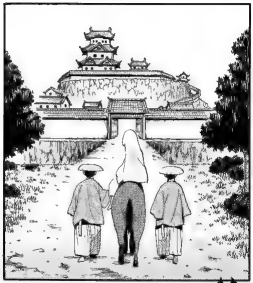
...TO KILLING PEOPLE.
I GOT USED...

...SAID TERRIFYING THINGS.
SOMEDAY I'D LIKE TO FACE YOU!
がっはっは
BWA HA HA
YOU'VE GOT SKILL!
AND OBA-YASHI-SEN-SEI...

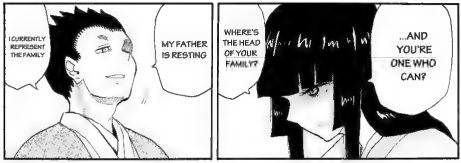
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN SUCCEEDING THE FURAN FAMILY.
WHY DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND?
KAJI-ROU.
I DON'T WANT TO BE A FIGHTER .
...MUCH LESS A LEADER
I'M A POLI-SHER.

I ONLY STAY HERE BECAUSE OF THE PRINCESS...
BECAUSE I HAVE MY SISTER.
HOUTAROU.
WHAT CAN I DO...
...FOR MY SISTER...

CLOP
CLIP



THIS IS A SURPRISE.
NO ONE TOLD ME... THE GOVERNMENT'S EMISSARY WAS A WOMAN.
MY NAME IS IWANA.
IWANA? HAH. THAT'S A KIND OF FISHY.
IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH ME BEING A WOMAN?
OH. I'M SORRY...
WOMEN HAVE VIOLENT TEMPERS... ...AND ARE WILLFUL.
I'M WORRIED WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HAVE A PROPER CONVERSATION
...


I CURRENTLY REPRESENT THE FAMILY.
MY FATHER IS RESTING
WHERE'S THE HEAD OF YOUR FAMILY?
...AND YOU'RE ONE WHO CAN?

...PER-HAPS?
SOMEONE LIKE YOUR OLDER BROTHER...
ISN'T THERE ANYONE BETTER SUITED TO THE JOB?
YOU REPRESENT THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY?

WHERE DID YOU HEAR THAT?!
I HAVE NO BROTHER!!

...CITIZENS HAVE EXPRESSED TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE REIGN OF THE FURAN FAMILY IS PUTTING THEM AT UNEASE.
RECENTLY YOU'VE BEEN CONSPIRING WITH LORDLESS SAMURAI AND OTHER RUFFIANS
SOME DOUBT YOU'RE A SUITABLE HEIR.
THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH YOUR INHERI-TANCE.

SNAP
KA...
...JIROU-SAN?
DO YOU AGREE? ACTING HEAD OF HOUSE...
GRRR...
WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE PEOPLE IF THE GOVERNMENT RULED IN PLACE OF THE FURAN FAMILY.
I HATE BEING CALLED THE SECOND SON!
DON'T CALL ME JIROU!!
I DECLARE WAR ON THE TOKUGAWA!!
SOMEONE KILL THIS WOMAN!

SERI-OUSLY
SERI-OUSLY?
SERI-OUSLY?

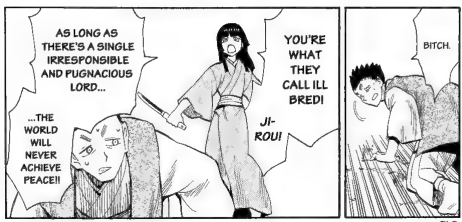
BUT IN AN INSTANT, SHE'D DRAWN A BLADE ON KAJIROU-SAMA...
...AND TOOK HIM HOS-TAGE.

KAJIROU-SAMA WAS QUICK TO ACT...

HRMPH
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EMISSARY?

THEY EVEN HAD US PREPARE A HORSE FOR EACH OF THEM.
THEY ESCAPED FROM THE CASTLE.

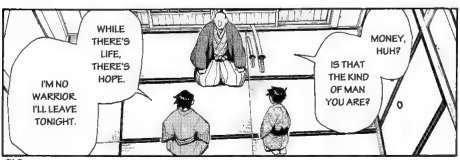
UGH!!
KICK
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!


AS LONG AS THERE'S A SINGLE IRRESPONSIBLE AND PUGNACIOUS LORD...
...THE WORLD WILL NEVER ACHIEVE PEACE!!
YOU'RE WHAT THEY CALL ILL BRED!
JI-ROU!
BITCH.

KAJI-ROU-SA-MA!!
YAH
YOU HAVE STARTED THIS FIRE!!
KNOW THIS!!
GALLOP GALLOP

I'M PREPARED TO STAND WITH THE FURAN FAMILY...
...BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU?
IT ALL HAP-PENED THIS MORNING.

I WON'T GET INVOLVED IN THIS WAR.
I'M WITH-DRAWING FROM THIS ONE.
I'M NOT BEING PAID ENOUGH FOR THIS.


WHILE THERE'S LIFE, THERE'S HOPE.
I'M NO WARRIOR. I'LL LEAVE TONIGHT.
MONEY, HUH?
IS THAT THE KIND OF MAN YOU ARE?

I HEARD THE KAJIMA POLISHERS ARE ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH THE FURAN.
YOU MUST OWE THEM YOUR ALLEGIANCE.
HOUTAROU, WHAT WILL YOU DO?
YOU'RE SKILLED. WILL YOU STAND WITH ME?
IT CAN'T BE HELPED
YOU MUST DECIDE BY THEN.
THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME. A LARGE ARMY MAY BE ARRIVING TOMORROW.
...
JINKUROU, TAKE CARE.
WELL, THEN I MUST PREPARE FOR BATTLE.

THIS IS GOOD.
NO ONE WILL TRY TO KILL YOU ANYMORE. THEY WON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT.
...DON'T BOTHER.
THE TOKUGAWA MEANT TO CRUSH THE FURAN FROM THE BEGINNING...
NO MATTER WHAT KAJIROU DID

IF THE FURAN REALLY ARE FINISHED..
THEY DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THE TOKUGAWA.
..THE FURAN ARE FINISHED

I ASK YOU TO KIDNAP AND PROTECT THE PRINCESS.
THEN I'LL HIRE YOU.
YOUR REWARD IS THE PRINCESS HERSELF.

IT SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM. MY SISTER'S IN LOVE WITH YOU.
AS HER OLDER BROTHER, I'LL ALLOW IT.
TAKE MY SISTER AS YOUR WIFE.
HOUTA-ROU..?

I CAN'T LET HER BURN HERSELF TO DEATH IN THE CASTLE EITHER.
...OR BECOME A TROPHY FOR THOSE SHITBAG TOKUGAWA.
I WON'T LET HER GET MARRIED TO SOME GEEZER SHE'S NEVER MET...

...I'LL MAKE SURE SHE'S HAPPY.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS...

...I MEANT TO KIDNAP THE PRINCESS ON MY OWN AND ESCAPE WITH HER.
I WOULD'VE DONE IT EVEN IF YOU HADN'T ASKED.
FROM THE MOMENT OBAYASHI DESCRIBED THE SITUATION TO US...

WHAT CAN I DO?
THANK YOU, FRIEND.

COME WITH ME.
I'M GLAD YOU DIDN'T SAY YOU'D PROTECT THE FURAN.

CIRCLE 17/END

スピリットサークル
魂環
SPIRIT CIRCLE

MOTHER

CIRCLE 18
HOUTAROU 4

RUSTLE
I'M GOING TO RESCUE MY SISTER RIHAMA!!
I HAVE TO GET HER OUT OF THE CASTLE BEFORE THE BATTLE BEGINS!
RUSTLE
WAIT.
A PATROL.
THREE PEOPLE
IT'S TOO MANY TO KILL AT ONCE.
CALM DOWN... WE JUST HAVE TO GET PAST THEM.
WE'RE STILL FAR AWAY
THEY'RE GONE
GULP

IS THIS REALLY THE RIGHT PLACE?
YEAH
THE SECRET PASSAGEWAY THE PRINCESS USES SHOULD BE AROUND HERE.
SHE TOLD ME ABOUT IT BEFORE.
SHE SAID NO ONE ELSE KNOWS ABOUT THE SECRET PASSAGEWAY.
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT HER FAMILY KNEW ABOUT IT AND TURNED A BLIND EYE?
PROBABLY NOT
IF HER FAMILY KNEW, THEN KAJIROU KNEW.
AND THERE'S NO WAY HE WOULD'VE LET THE PRINCESS COME SEE ME.
I GOT-CHA
SHUFFLE
THREE OF THEM...!
RUSTLE
THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY.
!!

SHHH!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT... WE'RE ACTUALLY HERE.
I TOLD YOU SO, OBAYASHI.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
...AND OBA-YASHI-SEN-SEI?!
P-PRIN-CESS?!

I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
TRAVEL WITH OBAYASHI-SAMA AS A PARTY OF FOUR.
MY NAME IS MATSU I'M THE PRINCESS' WET NURSE.
PLEASE TAKE THE PRINCESS AND RUN FAR AWAY.
HOUTAROU-SAMA, JINKUROU-SAMA

BUT.. THE BATTLE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.
MY LEGS ARE WEAK. I WOULD SLOW YOU DOWN.
I WILL STAY HERE.
FOUR... WHAT ABOUT YOU?
WE'VE ALREADY SAID OUR GOOD-BYES.
SHE'S BEEN CRYING
LET'S GO.
PRIN-CESS.
JINKUROU-DONO.
OBAYASHI-SAMA, PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THE PRINCESS.
YES, MATSU-DONO! I WILL GUARD HER WITH MY LIFE!

I, JINKU-ROU
...HAVE COME TO TAKE YOU AWAY AND CLAIM YOU FOR MYSELF.
I KNEW YOU WOULD COME.
I AM YOURS.

WELL, THEN
LET'S GO!
RUSTLE

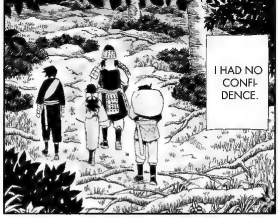
HOUTAROU-SAMA, TAKE CARE
...?
I'LL PROTECT THE PRINCESS WITH MY LIFE
I WILL

...MATSU APPARENTLY TOOK CARE OF YOU.
UNTIL KAJIROU WAS BORN. .
HOUTA-ROU.
...
DO YOU REMEMBER MATSU?

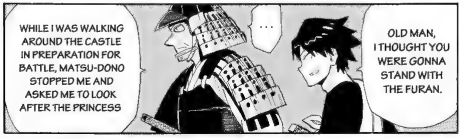
SHE'S ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE IN THE CASTLE WHO KNOWS WHO YOU ARE.
!

SNIFFLE
...
...

HOUTA-ROU.
LET'S LIVE.


I HAD NO CONFI-DENCE.

PRIN-CESS
YES.


WHILE I WAS WALKING AROUND THE CASTLE IN PREPARATION FOR BATTLE, MATSU-DONO STOPPED ME AND ASKED ME TO LOOK AFTER THE PRINCESS
. . .
OLD MAN, I THOUGHT YOU WERE GONNA STAND WITH THE FURAN.

I WONDER WHAT THAT PASSAGEWAY WAS LIKE. ?
BUT I HAD NO IDEA THAT A SECRET PASSAGEWAY WAS THERE

..PROTECTING THE PRINCESS MAY ALLOW THE FAMILY TO BE RESTORED

AAAH
AAAH
YAAAH

IT'S BEGUN..
THAT WAS QUICK.
SO SOON
THE ARMY WAS ALREADY NEARBY.
TOKUGAWA'S THE BIGGEST WARMONGER AROUND

THE FURAN ARE FINISHED.
KAJIROU... YOU FOOL..
...SEE YOU LATER.
DAD . KAJI-ROU .
...
YAAAH!
ROAR

...
ROAR
ROAAAR

AH HA HA HA HA !!
AHA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA !!
AAAH!
THE FIRE!
THE MASTER'S GONE CRAZY!!

VANN...
IF ONLY VANN-SAMA HAD BEEN HERE...
THE FLANTYR FAMILY'S FINISHED...

I WON'T LET YOU HAVE THE FLANTYR FAMILY!!
ROAR
IS THAT WHERE YOU ARE, VANN?!
BRO-THER!!
WHERE IS HE GOING?!
AAH!
WATCH OUT!!
ROAR
CRASH
SNAP
VANN?!
WHERE ARE YOU, VANN?!

JERK
びくっ

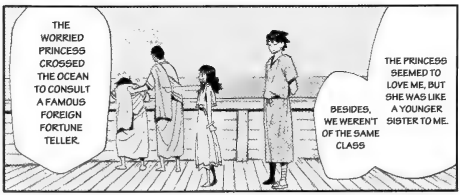
BROTHER!!

ZZZ ZZZ
HONK SHUU
...
A DREAM.

YOU HAVEN'T SLEPT, HAVE YOU?
SHALL WE GO?
NO.
I DID.
DON'T SLEEP.
YOURS ON WATCH
IT WAS JUST A LITTLE

I DON'T KNOW
JINKUROU, IS THERE ANYTHING AMISS?
THERE'S A WATERFALL NEARBY.
IT'LL HELPS US HIDE, BUT

I WAS AN APPRENTICE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY
THE PRINCESS EMPLOYING ME WAS PRINCESS RIHAMA.
RUMBLE
ゴゴゴ...
I HAD A STRANGE DREAM
YAWN.
OH ME, TOO


THE WORRIED PRINCESS CROSSED THE OCEAN TO CONSULT A FAMOUS FOREIGN FORTUNE TELLER.
BESIDES, WE WEREN'T OF THE SAME CLASS
THE PRINCESS SEEMED TO LOVE ME, BUT SHE WAS LIKE A YOUNGER SISTER TO ME.

...SATISFIED WITH HER MARRIAGE?
WAS THE PRINCESS IN YOUR DREAM...
THAT WAS MY DREAM
AND LEFT ON A JOURNEY.
I SAW THEM MARRIED...
I WAS OKAY WITH THAT.
THE FORTUNE TELLER PREDICTED THAT SHE MIGHT MARRY HOUTAROU

I FEEL SOME-THING
SOME-THING
SHE SAID SHE WOULDN'T MIND MARRY-ING YOU
YEAH. SHE WAS.
GUILTY
SOME-THING THAT MAKES ME FEEL...
YAWN
SPLASHHH
HUH..?
THOOM
RUMBLE
SPLASHHH
SWIP
THEY'RE CLOSE!!
HORSES!
THOOM
SPLASHHH
THOOM

WHUD
!!
PRIN-
CESS!!
PURSU-
ERS!!
HURGH..
OBAYA-
SHI!!
THOOM
THERE
THEY
ARE!
OVER
THERE!!
...!!
TAKE
HER UN-
SCATHED!!
YOU'LL
HIT THE
PRIN-
CESS!!
DON'T
SHOOT!

WE'LL HOLD THEM OFF THEM HERE!
JINKUROU!! THE PRINCESS!!
GO!
HOU--!
RIHAMA...!!
GO!!
BROTHER...!!

I'M SURE WE'LL--!!
HOUTA-ROU!!
JIN...
!
TUG
DASH

I'M SURE--!!
YEAH...!!

KI-YAH!!
THOOM
WHEW

NEIGH
WHAT'S WRONG?!
?!
THE HORSES?!
WHOA?!
WOW.
THAT'S CRAZY...!!
HE STOPPED THE HORSES WITH A SHOUT...?!
...?!
DASH
YEAH!!
SHFF
TCH!
MOVE!!
SNORT
LET'S DO IT!!
HOU-TA-KOU!!
SHFF

KLANG
GRAB
WHEID

YOU WILL NOT PASS!!

HOW-EVER...
THEY'RE PRETTY GOOD.
THESE TWO.
YAAAH

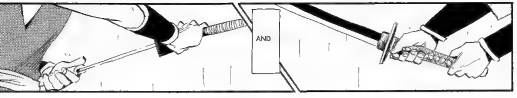
...FOOLISH WARRIORS.
FADE INTO HISTORY...
...THE AGE OF SWORDS.
THIS IS NO LONGER...
YAAAH!!

WHINNY
WHUAAP
YAAAH!!
MOVE!!
YOU...
SCUFF
SCRAPE
!!
HOUTA-
ROU!!

WHOA
SPLASHHH
HURCH
MAS-
TER!!
FIGHT
WELL
DAMN MY
PISTOL !!
THE
KNIFE !
SPLOOSH
PLINK
SPLASHHH
HOU-
TA-
ROU!!

ZSSSHH
SPLASHHH
HAH
HAH
HAH
COUGH
COUGH
SPLISHHH
HAH
HFF
HAH
HAH
HAH
THIS WOMAN
HA-AAH
HAH
HAH
SHE SEEMS FAMILIAR...

HAH
HAH
I FEEL LIKE I'VE MET HER BEFORE.
HAH
HAH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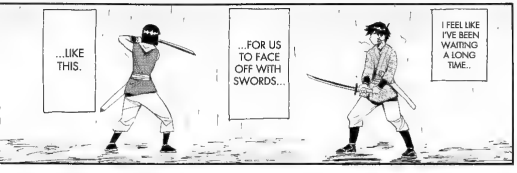
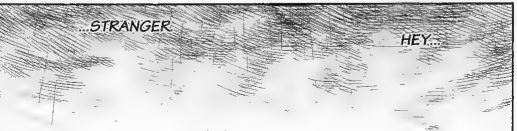

...LIKE THIS.
...FOR US TO FACE OFF WITH SWORDS...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME..


...STRANGER
HEY...

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

..I THINK WE FOUGHT ON THE RUN...
FOR QUITE A WHILE
CONVINCED I HAD TO GET HER AS FAR AWAY FROM RIHAMA AND THE OTHERS AS POSSIBLE..
I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

I THINK SHE WAS JUST AS CAPTIVATED AS I WAS.
BUT I..
NEVER GREW BORED

AFTER A WHILE, A LOUD NOISE BEGAN AP-PROACHING..
-RUMBLE-

-RUMBLE-

RUMBLE...
RUMBLE
RUMBLE...
CIRCLE 18/END

スピリットサークル
魂環
SPIRIT CIRCLE

KAJIROU

火次郎

CIRCLE 19
HOUTAROU 5

YAAAHH!!

RUMBLE
?!
IT'S COLLAPSING
IT'S COLLAPSING
WATCH OUT
IT'S DANGEROUS!

RUMBLE

RUMBLE

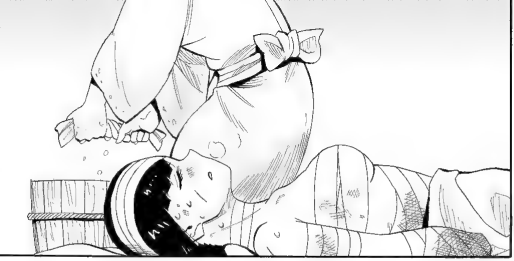
SO HOT...

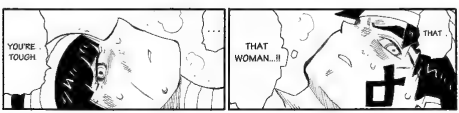
IT HURTS...

SO PAINFUL...

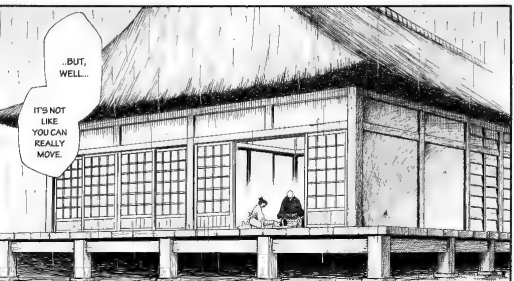
IT HURTS...

SO PAINFUL...!!

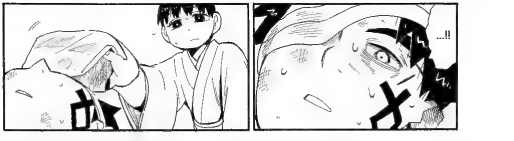



YOU'RE TOUGH.
...
THAT WOMAN..!!
THAT

YOU'LL REOPEN YOUR WOUNDS.
DON'T
HNNGH.
H..RGH.
UGH.


..BUT, WELL...
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN REALLY MOVE.

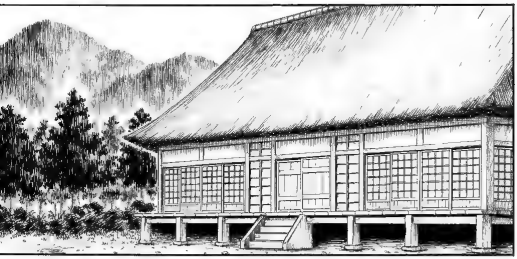
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN REALLY MOVE.


...!!

SHE'S BEEN TAKING CARE OF YOU THIS WHOLE TIME.
SHE'S THE ONE WHO FOUND YOU IN THE MOUNTAINS WHERE THAT LANDSLIDE HIT AND INSISTED THAT WE SAVE YOU.
YOU SHOULD THANK AKARI.

SMILE

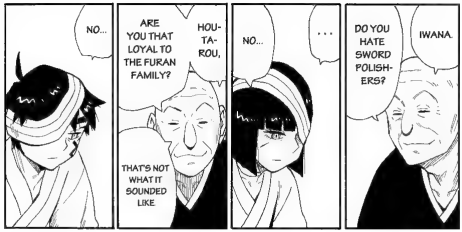
THA...
...ANK...
YOU.

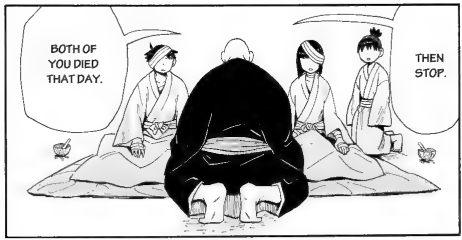


CAN'T YOU FEED YOURSELF ..
..TOKUGAWA DOG?
AAAH.
OPEN UP

SHUT UP, SAMURAI'S MINION.
IT'S HARD TO EAT WITH MY LEFT HAND.
WHO ARE YOU CALLING A MINION?
YOU DOG!
WHO ARE YOU CALLING A DOG?
YOU SUBJUGATE YOURSELF TO KILLERS AND POLISH THEIR KNIVES.
YOU'RE A KILLER, TOO...
...VILE WOMAN!!
SNIFF
DON'T FIGHT
SHUNK
ER.
S-SORRY. WE'LL STOP.
OKAY?
!!
I'M NOT ANGRY.

PRIEST...
PLEASE FORGIVE ME. THANKS TO YOU, I'VE RECOVERED TO THE POINT I CAN SIT UP.
BUT IF YOU KEEP SHOUTING, YOUR WOUNDS WILL OPEN.
GLUG GLUG
YOU SEEM TO BE FEELING BETTER.
?
BUT IT'S STRANGE.
I'VE ALREADY ASKED WHO YOU ARE AND HOW YOU ENDED UP IN THOSE MOUNTAINS...
WELL, THEN .. IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE RESCUED YOU...
HRM.
GIVEN YOUR CURRENT CONDITION, THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO FIGHT ANYMORE.
...BUT WHY DO YOU FIGHT SO MUCH?
YOU MAY HAVE CROSSED SWORDS ..
YOUR SITUATIONS ASIDE, YOU'VE NEVER MET EACH OTHER BEFORE.
SHE'S A SERVANT OF THE TOKUGAWA WHO TRIED TO CRUSH THE FURAN FAMILY.
HE'S THE SWORD POLISHER TO SAMURAI WHO SPREAD WAR AND UNHAPPINESS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.


NO...
ARE YOU THAT LOYAL TO THE FURAN FAMILY?
HOU-TA-ROU,
THAT'S NOT WHAT IT SOUNDED LIKE
NO...
...
DO YOU HATE SWORD POLISH-ERS?
IWANA.


BOTH OF YOU DIED THAT DAY.
THEN STOP.

THE BUDDHA BROUGHT YOU HERE.
ALLOW...
...YOURSELVES TO BE REBORN HERE.

STOP?
THEN...

SHIVER

DID MY BODY BECOME LIGHTER...?

JUST NOW...

WHAT WAS THAT?

YOU CAN'T RETURN TO YOUR FORMER PROFESSIONS IN YOUR CONDITION.
YOU SHOULD GET MARRIED...
...AND ADOPT AKARI.

HAPPY!!
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT HAVING THEM FOR PARENTS, AKARI?
I SEE. I SEE.
WHAT...?!

BEAM
はぁぁぁ～。

THINK ABOUT IT.
GULP
WELL, YOU'VE GOT LOTS OF TIME.
SHUNK

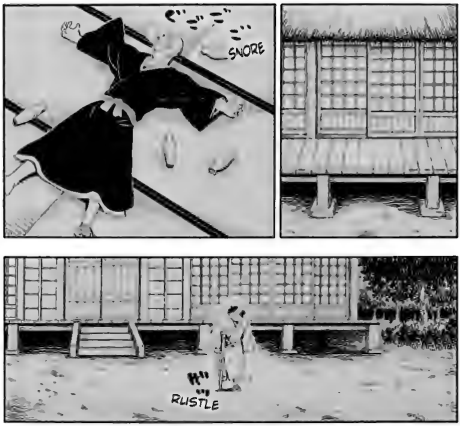
ERRR...?

AT LEAST, I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO.
YEAH, NO.
NO WAY
BUT OUR ANSWER DIDN'T CHANGE.
WE HAD TIME
EVEN THOUGH WE'D TAKEN EACH OTHERS' LIMBS
YEAH, WE'RE NOT GETTING MARRIED
STRANGELY, WE DIDN'T HATE EACH OTHER ANY-MORE.
I DON'T MIND ADOPTING AKARI.
...WE WERE SATISFIED.
...IT FELT LIKE...
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY...
IT HAPPENED WHILE WE WERE PRACTICING WALKING WITH THE CRUTCHES THE PRIEST MADE FOR US.
THUNK
MORE TIME PASSED.

THE FURAN FAMILY'S FINAL MOMENTS WERE MAGNIFICENT.
YEAH.
GOOD WORK!
THESE ARE NICE.
YEAH
WE CAN WALK PRETTY WELL

THE FLEEING PRINCESS GOT CAUGHT IN A LANDSLIDE ALONG WITH HER PURSUERS AND THEY ALL DIED.
THE YOUNG CLAN REPRESENTATIVE SET FIRE TO THE CASTLE AND KILLED HIMSELF.

DON'T I KNOW IT
THE GOVERNMENT CAN BE CRUEL, BUT THE HEAVENS HAVE NO MERCY EITHER.

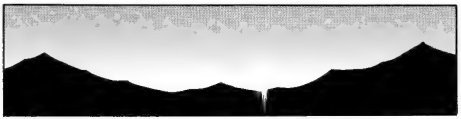

SNORE
RUSTLE

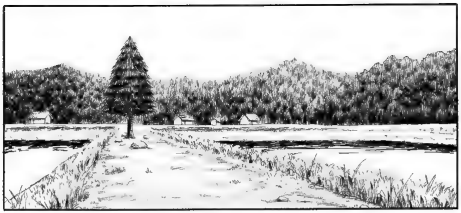
EVEN IF THEY'RE ALIVE, A LOT OF TIME HAS PASSED
DIDN'T THEY DIE IN THE LANDSLIDE?
TELL THEM I'LL REPAY THEM SOMEDAY
TAKE CARE OF AKARI AND THE PRIEST

WE'D PLANNED TO MEET SOMEWHERE IF WE GOT SEPARATED
THE NEARBY VILLAGE
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

JUST..
JUST TO SEE.
FOR WHAT REA-SON?
WHY?
I'LL GO WITH YOU.
WAIT.
FORGET ABOUT MY MISSION...
HOP
HOP
EVEN IF THE PRINCESS IS ALIVE, YOU CAN'T CARRY HER OFF IN YOUR CONDITION.
...
FINE.
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH

HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH





HAH
HAH
NO ONE'S
HAH
HAH
...HERE
HNNGH...
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
IS THIS THE PLACE?
HIS
HAH
HAH
HAH

IT'S THE SAME AS THE SCAR ON YOUR CHEEK...
WHAT MARK..?
THE MARK ON THE TREE...
HOUTA-ROU...
SEE?
I KNEW IT.
I KNEW IT.
SEE?
HA... HA HA.
IT'S JINKU-ROU.

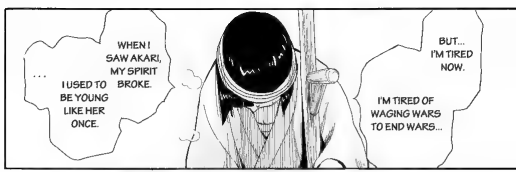
THE WORLD THINKS WE'RE DEAD
NO ONE WILL COME
WE'RE ALIVE.
THEY'RE ALIVE, TOO.

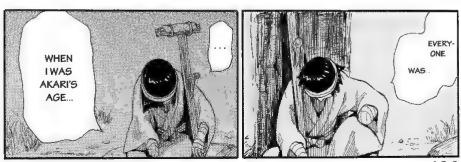
...WERE FRIENDS...
THAT WAS...
WE...

I SEE...
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT AFTER I TAKE A BREAK.
I'M GOING FROM WALKING TO MUCH.
I DON'T KNOW.
WILL YOU GO AFTER THEM?
WHAT? NO WAY!

I... I'M GOING BACK TO THE TEMPLE AFTER I REST...
I'M GOING TO ADOPT AKARI.
...HUH. SOUNDS GOOD.
MAYBE I'LL GO BACK, TOO...
I DO OWE AKARI AND THE PRIEST.

...I'VE WORKED A LONG TIME.
IN ORDER TO END WARS,
I THOUGHT I HAD TO ELIMINATE EVERY LAST WAR-MONGERING LORD...
SO I WORKED.


BUT... I'M TIRED NOW.
I'M TIRED OF WAGING WARS TO END WARS...
WHEN I SAW AKARI, MY SPIRIT BROKE.
I USED TO BE YOUNG LIKE HER ONCE.
...


EVERY-ONE WAS...
...
WHEN I WAS AKARI'S AGE...

...
MY FAMILY IS FROM THE WEST.
THE LEADER OF THE NINJAS TOOK PITY ON ME AND TOOK ME IN...
...HEY, HOUTA-ROU...?
...
HUH... I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF A STORY, TOO.
...
SIGH...
I GUESS I'LL...
...TAKE A NAP...
...TOO...
...
I'M AWAKE.
WHAT FAMILY... FROM THE WEST?
...HUH?
WHY?
BUT IT'S NOT OVER YET.

CIRCLE 19/END

スピリットサークル
魂環
SPIRIT CIRCLE

SPACIFICA
スパスシフィカ